

State Dept. review completed

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

**TOP SECRET SENSITIVE
EXCLUSIVE EYES ONLY**

1972 MAR 7 AM 8 28

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T O P S E C R E T SENSITIVE 071015Z NOV 72 VIA CAS CHANNELS (BUNKER)
FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 0252
TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER
REF: WHS 2313
SECTION 1 OF 2

1. IN VIEW OF REFTTEL, I THINK IT MAY BE USEFUL TO REVIEW THE STATE OF THE PLAY HERE AS IT HAS DEVELOPED IN THE TWO WEEKS SINCE YOUR DEPARTURE.

2. THIEU HAS USED THE INTERIM PERIOD TO EMPHASIZE WIDELY HIS MAJOR CONCERNS AND TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT FOR HIS POSITION AND TO PREPARE THE POPULATION FOR A CEASE-FIRE. AS YOU KNOW, HE HAS IGNORED THE MAJOR CONCESSIONS BY THE OTHER SIDE IN WITHDRAWING DEMANDS FOR HIS RESIGNATION AND FOR A COALITION GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CONCORD (LEAVING THE GVN INTACT). THIS MAY NOT BE A BAD THING AS HE WILL NEED THIS AMMUNITION WHEN, AS I THINK HE WILL, HE CONCURS IN THE AGREEMENT YOUR WORK OUT.

3. THIEU HAS PICTURED THE ABSENCE OF A PROVISION FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES AS A MAJOR CONCESSION TO THE OTHER SIDE, BUT HE HAS NOT HIGHLIGHTED THE FACT THAT OUR PREVIOUS PROPOSALS HAD ALWAYS PROVIDED, HOWEVER PHRASED, FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS FROM SOUTH VIET-NAM. THE FACT THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS ARE TO BE WITHDRAWN FROM CAMBODIA AND LAOS ADDS TO HIS SUSPICION THAT HANOI WILL MAINTAIN THAT THEIR TROOPS HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE ANYWHERE TO VIET-NAM, NORTH OR SOUTH. THIEU HAS ASSERTED THAT IN ADDITION TO THE 143,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN NORTH VIETNAMESE UNITS, THERE ARE AT LEAST 100,000 MORE FILLERS IN VC UNITS WHO CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED AND WILL REMAIN IN COUNTRY IN ANY EVENT.

MORI/CDF C03317542

4. THE LACK OF REFERENCE TO THE DMZ IN THE AGREEMENT THIEU SEES AS PROVIDING AN AVENUE FOR CONTINUING INFILTRATION OF MEN AND SUPPLIES AS WELL AS A DILUTION OF SOUTH VIET-NAM'S STATUS AS AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY.

5. THIEU HAS CRITICIZED THE NCRC AS GIVING THE NLF EQUAL WEIGHT WITH THE GVN WHEREAS IT IN FACT REPRESENTS ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF THE POPULATION; HE THUS SEES THIS THREE SEGMENT FORM AS AN ATTEMPT TO INTRODUCE IN EFFECT A COALITION GOVERNMENT, A SUSPICION CONFIRMED BY WHAT HE VIEWS AS SINISTER DIFFERENCES IN THE ENGLISH AND VIET-NAMESE TEXTS.

6. THIEU ALSO HAS BEEN CONCERNED BY THE EFFECT THAT THE DISCLOSURE OF THE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT MAY HAVE ON POLITICAL STABILITY AND ON THE MORALE OF THE MILITARY AND CIVILIANS. HIS CONCERNS HAVE BEEN GIVEN SOME VALIDITY BY THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE PREVAILING HERE IN RECENT WEEKS, PARTLY A RESULT OF THE FACT THAT EVEN THOUGHTFUL PEOPLE ARE BADLY INFORMED AND PUZZLED. THEY SEE THE CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN WHAT IS SAID IN HANOI, SAIGON, AND WASHINGTON, AND THIEU'S AND LAM'S INTEMPERATE AND ILL ADVISED REMARKS HAVE, OF COURSE, WORSENERED AN ALREADY DIFFICULT SITUATION.

7. THIEU HAS PLAYED ON THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL SITUATION - FEAR OF THE COMMUNISTS, DISTRUST OF THE AMERICANS, AND APPREHENSION REGARDING THE FUTURE - TO UNITE PEOPLE IN SUPPORT OF HIS POSITION AND FOR HIM PERSONALLY IN HIS ROLE OF DEFENDER OF SOUTH VIET-NAM AGAINST ALL COMERS. IN FACT, THERE IS GREATER UNITY IN POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CIRCLES THAN I HAVE SEEN HERE SINCE NOVEMBER 1968. MASS MEETINGS HAVE BEEN HELD IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AND RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY MANY POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE GVN POSITION. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THE COUNTRY IS GALVANIZED BEHIND THIEU, AS WITNESS PRIME MINISTER KHIEM'S VIEWS REPORTED IN SAIGON 0249; OR THAT ARVN HAS BECOME AGGRESSIVE OR BOLD. INDEED, THE LAST MAN TO DIE SYNDROME IS SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING ARVN'S EFFECTIVE-

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FINAL SECTION OF 2

NESS AND WE ARE GETTING SOME REPORTS OF RICH PEOPLE WHO ARE POISED TO LEAVE. NEVERTHELESS THIEU IS ARTICULATING DEEPLY HELD BELIEFS AND WHEN HE DECLAIMS AGAINST COALITION GOVERNMENT AND AGAINST THE NVA STAYING IN THE SOUTH HE IS SAYING WHAT PEOPLE WANT TO HEAR.

8. WHAT SEEM TO BE HIS OBJECTIVES AND WHAT DOES HE HOPE TO ACHIEVE? I THINK ONE MIGHT ENUMERATE THE FOLLOWING:

-- TO STRENGTHEN THE MORALE OF THE CIVILIAN AND THE MILITARY AND TO MAINTAIN POLITICAL STABILITY LOOKING TO A FORTHCOMING POLITICAL CONTEST WITH THE NLF.

-- BY SHOWING THAT THE COUNTRY IS SOLIDLY BEHIND HIM, ADDING WEIGHT TO HIS DEMAND FOR BETTER TERMS IN THE AGREEMENT.

-- BY DEMONSTRATING THAT HE HAS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT NOT ONLY IN VIET-NAM, BUT IN OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES PLACE US IN A POSITION OF WHICH WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LET HIM DOWN; THAT TO GO AHEAD WITH AN AGREEMENT OVER HIS OPPOSITION WOULD DEMONSTRATE THNUFAILURE OF OUR VIET-NAM POLICY.

3- TO SOLIDITY HIS POSITION IN CASE HE ~~IS~~ *(BEING SERVICED BY WHCA)*

MS CONSTRAINED TO ACCEDE TO THE AGREEMENT. HE COULD THEN SHIFT THE RESPONSIBILITY TO US - A PRACTICE TO WHICH OTHER SMALL, WEAK NATIONS HAVE FELT COMPELLED SOMETIMES TO RESORT - AND SAY THAT HIS VIGILANCE AND DETERMINATION HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT IMPORTANT CONCESSIONS WHICH SAFEGUARD THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIET-NAM AND THUS RALLY SUPPORT FOR A FUTURE POLITICAL CONTEST WITH THE NLF.

9. HOWEVER, DESPITE THE VIGOR WITH WHICH THIEU HAS BEEN PRESENTING HIS POSITION, I DO NOT BELIEVE HE IS LOCKED IN YET. HE HAS INSTRUCTED THE EMISSARIES HE HAS SENT TO OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES TO BE CAREFUL TO INDICATE THAT THERE IS NO CONFRONTATION BETWEEN HIM AND THE U.S. AND HE HAS PUT OUT SIMILAR INSTRUCTIONS TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND AGENCIES.

10. I THINK THE ENGLISH VERSION OF NCRC IS PERFECTLY SALEABLE HERE. MY GUESS IS, HOWEVER, THAT THIEU WILL BE DIFFICULT ON THE NVA ISSUE. HE LACKS CONFIDENCE IN THE OUTCOME OF A POLITICAL CONTEST, EVEN WITH THE NVA GONE, AND IS DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER THE CHAOTIC SITUATION HE ANTICIPATES IF HE ACCEPTS THEIR CONTINUED PRESENCE AND DOUBTS HIS ABILITY TO BE PERSUASIVE WITH HIS COMMANDERS, PROVINCE CHIEFS, AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE. HE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS PROBLEM, OF COURSE, BY HIS STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS DURING AND SINCE YOUR VISIT, BUT FEAR OF THE NVA IS A LONG-STANDING TRAUMA HERE. HE HAS INDICATED TO ME, HOWEVER, THAT HE CAN LIVE WITH A DE FACTO WITHDRAWAL AND I THINK HE COULD CLIMB DOWN ON THE BASIS OF SIGNALS FROM HANOI OR ASSURANCES FROM US.

11. AS I SAID IN MY 0251, SINCE IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT THIEU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE GOOD ON THE UNCOMPROMISING POSITION HE HAS TAKEN, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE MUST HELP FIND A RELATIVELY GRACEFUL WAY FOR HIM TO BACK DOWN. AL HAIG'S VISIT, BRINGING WITH HIM A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT, WILL BE IMPORTANT IN MAKING CLEAR WHAT WE CAN OR CANNOT GET CHANGED. THE REVISED TIME FRAME MENTIONED IN YOUR MESSAGE GIVES THIEU TIME TO FACE UP TO THE FACTS OF LIFE AND TO UNDERTAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS IN HIS PUBLIC POSTURE. IF POSSIBLE IT MIGHT BE WISE TO WORK THE VISIT TO PRESIDENT NIXON INTO YOUR PLANS TO HAVE AS A SAFETY VALVE IF WE ARE STILL HAVING PROBLEMS WITH THIEU. WHAT I HAVE IN MIND IS THAT THE VISIT MIGHT BE SCHEDULED BEFORE RATHER THAN AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT AND THAT THIEU WOULD BE ABLE TO SAY THAT THE COMMITMENT OF CONTINUED SUPPORT WHICH HE HAD RECEIVED FROM THE PRESIDENT GAVE ADEQUATE ASSURANCE THAT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE COULD LOOK FORWARD TO A FUTURE OF PEACE AND PROGRESS. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST THIS, OF COURSE, IS THAT THIEU MIGHT BE MADE TO APPEAR TO THE OTHERSIDE AS AN ENEMY OF HIS OWN PEOPLE AS SUBSERVIENT TO THE U.S.

12. I LOOK FORWARD TO AL HAIG'S VISIT AND WILL BE DELIGHTED TO HAVE HIM AND HIS STAFF STAY WITH ME.

13. WARM REGARDS.

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